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STAR WARS™

THE OFFICIAL STARSHIPS & VEHICLES COLLECTION

11

THE IMPERIAL SPEEDER BIKE

Scout trooper's repulsorlift vehicle

Paploo the Ewok

Defining Palpatine

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STAR WARS

"THERE'S TWO MORE WRECKED SPEEDERS BACK THERE. AND I FOUND THIS."

LUKE SKYWALKER

Incredibly fast and eye-wateringly manoeuvrable, the Aratech Repulsor Company 74-Z speeder bike was the mainstay of the Empire's scout troops. Able to exceed 500 km/h, and armed with a blaster cannon, the tough 74-Z saw service from the Clone Wars through to the establishment of the New Republic and beyond.

SPEEDER BIKE

HIGH-SPEED IMPERIAL CRAFT

Whether scouting new locations, patrolling already subjugated worlds or acting as support for troops and larger ground assault vehicles during the Galactic Civil War, the Imperial scout troopers relied on an old standard – the 74-Z speeder bike.

The 74-Z was manufactured by the Aratech Repulsor Company, one of the galaxy's corporate survivors. After a number of high-profile failures in the areas of droid manufacture and computer hardware, Aratech concentrated on their core repulsorlift vehicle division. The 74-Z was an adapted version of the civilian 74-Y and included a number of additional features that made it an instant hit. It was used in conflicts from the latter years of the Clone Wars through to the war against the Yuuzhan Vong.

Though lightly armoured, the 74-Z's real defence was its 500 km/h-plus top speed and its astounding manoeuvrability. Steering was provided by the four angled vanes mounted at the front of the bike, which were operated by the handlebars and modified by the manoeuvring control systems. The throttle was in one of the handlebar grips, while the foot pedals took care of altitude.

Versatile Craft

At 25m, the 74-Z had a lower flight ceiling than earlier speeder bikes – the BARC speeder, for example, could be used to fly support for atmosphere craft – but the cost savings made up for this. The 74-Z was also more lightly armed, with only a light blaster cannon for attack and defence. However, the speeder bike was meant for patrol and reconnaissance - not fighting.

If a scout encountered opposition, they were expected to get away as fast as possible and report the situation. The craft's advanced comms and sensor package, complete with a powerful jamming

device, made that job much easier. Once a report was made, the Imperial biker scout could expect heavy supporting fire from vehicles designed for just that purpose.

Long History

On the outbreak of the Clone Wars, Aratech came down on the side of the Republic. The first few 74-Z speeder bikes were used at the Battle of Geonosis, entering general service as the war raged on, and slowly replacing the more costly BARC speeders. On a darker note, Jedi Knight Stass Allie was leading a flight of 74-Zs on the planet Saleucami when Palpatine issued Order 66. Her clone trooper wingmen dropped back and opened fire on the leader, destroying the Jedi Master.

Following the birth of the Empire, the 74-Z soon became popularly known as the Imperial speeder bike, though many found their way into the hands of the Rebel Alliance. The Rebel sympathies of some Aratech employees were never fully investigated, but the majority of the speeder bikes in Rebel hands were built up from captured stock and not illicit 'donations'.

By the end of the Civil War, the 74-Z had spread across the galaxy. Inexpensive and easy to maintain, it remains hugely popular with humanoid species everywhere.

INTO THE ACTION!
THE ENDOR SPEEDER BIKE CHASE

The dense forests of Endor meant that the Empire relied heavily on the Aratech 74-Z speeder bike to get around. Scout patrols flew through the giant trees, maintaining the wide security perimeter around the shield generator complex.

Above the forest moon of Endor, the Empire was building a second Death Star station. In fact, the whole massive construction project was a trap designed to destroy the Rebel Alliance and turn Luke Skywalker to the dark side of the Force. Part of the trap was the shield generator based on the moon. Although a legion of troops was posted there, as well as a number of AT-AT and AT-ST walkers, the security perimeter was maintained and patrolled by mobile Imperial scout troopers – dubbed 'biker scouts'.

Expected Opposition

When the Rebel strike team, led by General Han Solo, landed on the Endor moon, they expected to encounter scout troopers. Sure enough, the team spotted two scouts. Han led a sneak attack on them, but failed to spot the other two scouts in the patrol group. Following their orders to the letter, the scouts fled to report the Rebel incursion. Leia Organa and Luke

Skywalker quickly gave chase through the forest on the only remaining serviceable speeder bike.

The Pursuit

Jamming the communications of their Imperial prey, Luke and Leia were able to catch up with the fleeing scouts. Luke leapt onto one of the bikes, bundling the pilot off. Luke and Leia were forced to separate to deal with the scouts that converged on the chase. The Jedi was able to deal with his opponents, but he faced a long walk back to the others. Leia, although she destroyed the biker scouts who attacked her, was knocked unconscious.

Odd Allies

Leia was discovered, still out cold, by the young Ewok warrior, Wicket. The two became allies after another two Imperial scouts chanced upon the pair. Working together, the Princess and the Ewok defeated the scouts. The chance encounter and resulting alliance would be key to the Rebel victory at Endor.

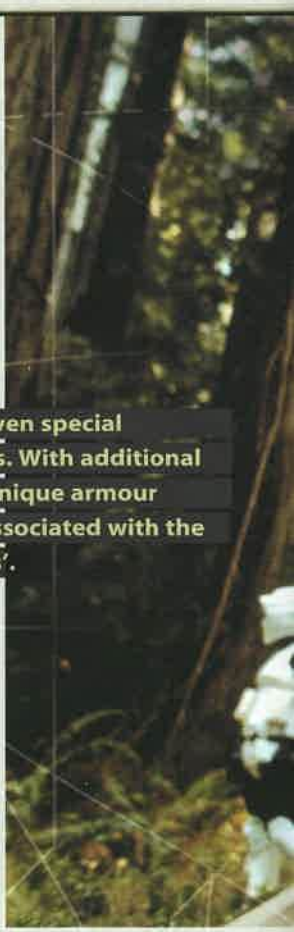
"Keep on that one! I'll take these two!"

Luke to Leia.

SCOUT TROOPERS

ELITE IMPERIAL UNIT

In the Imperial Army, select stormtroopers are given special training to prepare them for specific combat roles. With additional reconnaissance and survival training, as well as unique armour and equipment, the scout trooper was so often associated with the Aratech 74-Z that they were dubbed 'biker scouts'.



As with all specialised Imperial troops, the scout troopers' armour distinguished them from other Imperial stormtroopers. Worn over the same temperature-controlled black body glove as every other branch of the stormtroopers, the rest of the scouts' armour was lighter and allowed for greater flexibility, not to mention increased comfort of the trooper whilst riding a speeder bike.

Tunnel Vision

Despite carrying the same breathing gear and comlink, the scout trooper helmet was far more complex than that of the stormtrooper, with equipment designed to assist the trooper during high speed flight. Blinkers forced the scout to concentrate on what was directly ahead, relying on the in-built, motion-detecting sensors to alert them to any peripheral dangers. Night vision, targeting sensors and target magnification were all built into the faceplate, as well as the ability to detect energy emissions. The helmet systems could tie in to terrain analysis sensors and software on their speeder bike, assisting the pilot in surviving the high speeds at which they flew.

Specialised Training

Relying completely on the visual technology of their equipment was an adjustment not all Imperial troops could accept, despite the training, and the failure rate for scout trainees was high. Those who succeeded usually operated in a

Scout troopers have motion sensors, enhanced macrobinocular viewplates allowing them to see energy emissions, night vision and designated target magnification.

PROFILE

Scout Trooper
Height:
1.83 metres
Weapons:
Blaster rifle and blaster pistol
Affiliation:
Empire

four-man unit called a lance, led by a trooper sergeant, though they were also trained to operate independently in a way that few other Imperial troops were.

Survival Equipment

Imperial scout troopers were issued with a variety of survival equipment suitable to the terrain they were operating in. Though their white armour was rarely suitable for concealment in their surroundings,

the verdant forests of the Endor moon for example, they were issued with camouflage tents. Other equipment included survival rations, heat packs, a water purifier and flares. For some long-range reconnaissance operations, scout troopers were even issued with recon droids and defensive auto-turrets.

Basic Weaponry

Although they could be issued with the DC-15x sniper rifle or the more standard DC-15 blaster rifle, scout troopers usually carried a simple, light 'holdout' blaster pistol, which was slipped into a holster in their boot for convenient access on the move. A scout's gloves were rather bulky, so the small blaster pistol used a pressure-sensitive stock rather than a trigger.

Despite carrying grenades or thermal detonators, scout troopers were trained to avoid combat and simply to get away from the enemy so they could report their position, ensuring that other units of the Imperial Army were brought into the situation as soon as possible. That said, scout troopers were occasionally used as supplementary anti-infantry support for AT-AT and AT-ST units, as was the case both at the Battle of Endor and, earlier, during the Battle of Hoth.

Scout troopers were trained to work everywhere, and that included

Behind the scenes

Designer Nilo Rodis-Jamero likened the scout troopers to kamikaze pilots who needed to see only what was directly in front of them. This was part of the inspiration for the viewplate shroud on their helmets, which resemble the blinders worn by racehorses.

operating in freezing temperatures. The Imperial assault on the Rebel alliance base on Hoth included scout troops wearing modified snowtrooper armour, with the heating system plugging directly into the power source of their bikes.

Infiltrators

Though Imperial scouts were an elite group in their own right, there were still more specialist scout units. These were the infiltrators – veteran, highly trained individuals sent in to scout out particularly secure or dangerous locations. The most feared of these were the Storm Commandos, formed by Crix Madine, who later defected to the Rebel Alliance.

Though the Storm Commando unit was not entirely composed of scouts, as its members were drawn from all branches of the Imperial military, Storm Commando armour was based closely on that of the scout trooper, but coloured midnight black. The Storm Commandos flew highly modified 74-Z speeder bikes. To avoid detection, these craft were fitted with trideflective energy shielding that masked their approach.

Endor Scouts

The scouts on Endor were part of an elite legion of the Imperial Army specially stationed on the orders of Emperor Palpatine himself. Though tasked with standard patrol duties, they were also part of the trap set by Palpatine for the Alliance and, particularly, Luke Skywalker. As such, the troops were ordered to capture the Rebel commando team and bring them in alive for interrogation, something that made their task that bit harder – particularly for the lightly armed and armoured biker scouts.

EWOK HANG GLIDER

AN INGENIOUS INVENTION

Though often dismissed as a primitive, stone-age, pseudo-civilisation, the Ewoks of Endor created many complex devices from the most simple, natural elements. One of these was the hang glider, used for travel, hunting – and to defeat Imperials!

Called 'skin gliders' by the Ewoks, hang gliders were constructed with great care by craftsfolk of the Ewok tribes, using highly skilled techniques and remarkable engineering understanding handed down and refined from generation to generation. Only certain tree branches could be used, and only the skins of just the right animals, cured and stretched to exacting standards, were strong enough and light enough to make a glider.

Soaring Flight

Launched from the highest platforms of the villages, the hang gliders may have originally simply been used for transport – a role they still perform, carrying up to two fully grown Ewoks at any one time. However, they were also used to search open areas for lost Ewoks, and to scout for prey or enemies.

Swooping Dives

At some point, one of the more warlike Ewoks must have figured out that the skin gliders could be used to carry weapons. As a result, gliders are used in defence of Ewok villages and in hunting. Rocks can be dropped with remarkable accuracy by experienced glider pilots, and some Ewoks can even use their bows and arrows from the air to target prey too high in the air for regular hunting parties on the ground. That said, rocks and arrows, while good against Gorax, proved useless against AT-STs...

Ewok hang glider profile

Type:
Ewok skin glider

Manufacturer:
Ewok craftsfolk

Weapons:
Rocks, bows and arrows

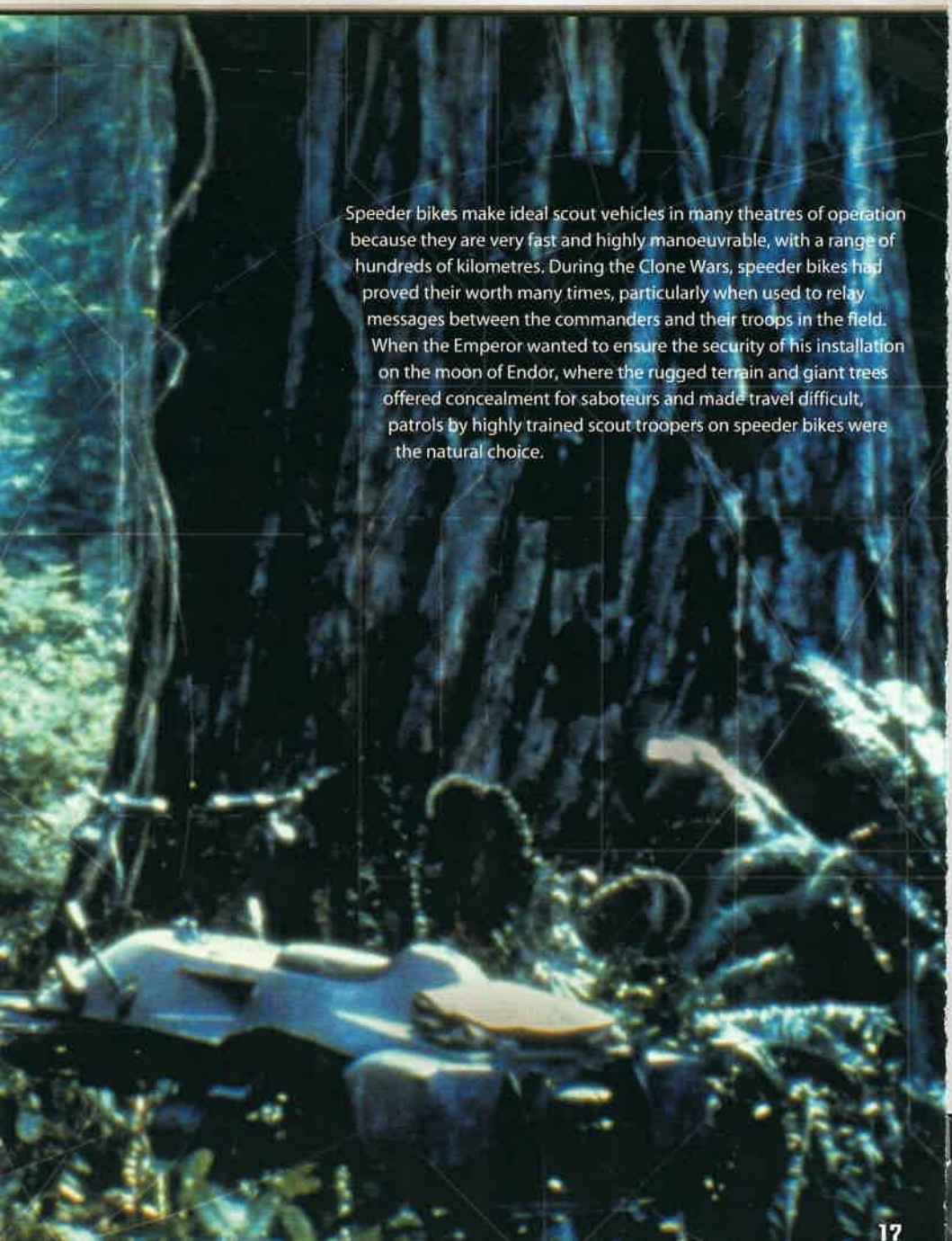
Crew:
1 Ewok (plus 1 passenger)

Affiliation:
None

THE SPEEDER BIKE

THE PERFECT SOLUTION

Aratech's military speeder bike was the perfect choice of vehicle for the Imperial scout troopers stationed on the moon of Endor as it combined high speed with incredible manoeuvrability, allowing the biker scouts to patrol areas of the deep forest that were inaccessible to larger vehicles.



Speeder bikes make ideal scout vehicles in many theatres of operation because they are very fast and highly manoeuvrable, with a range of hundreds of kilometres. During the Clone Wars, speeder bikes had proved their worth many times, particularly when used to relay messages between the commanders and their troops in the field. When the Emperor wanted to ensure the security of his installation on the moon of Endor, where the rugged terrain and giant trees offered concealment for saboteurs and made travel difficult, patrols by highly trained scout troopers on speeder bikes were the natural choice.

THE IMPERIAL SPEEDER BIKE

Type
74-Z speeder bike

Class
Repulsorcraft

Size
4.4m long

Manufacturer
Aratech Repulsor Company

Speed
Maximum: 500 km/h

Weapon
Blaster cannon

Crew
1 pilot

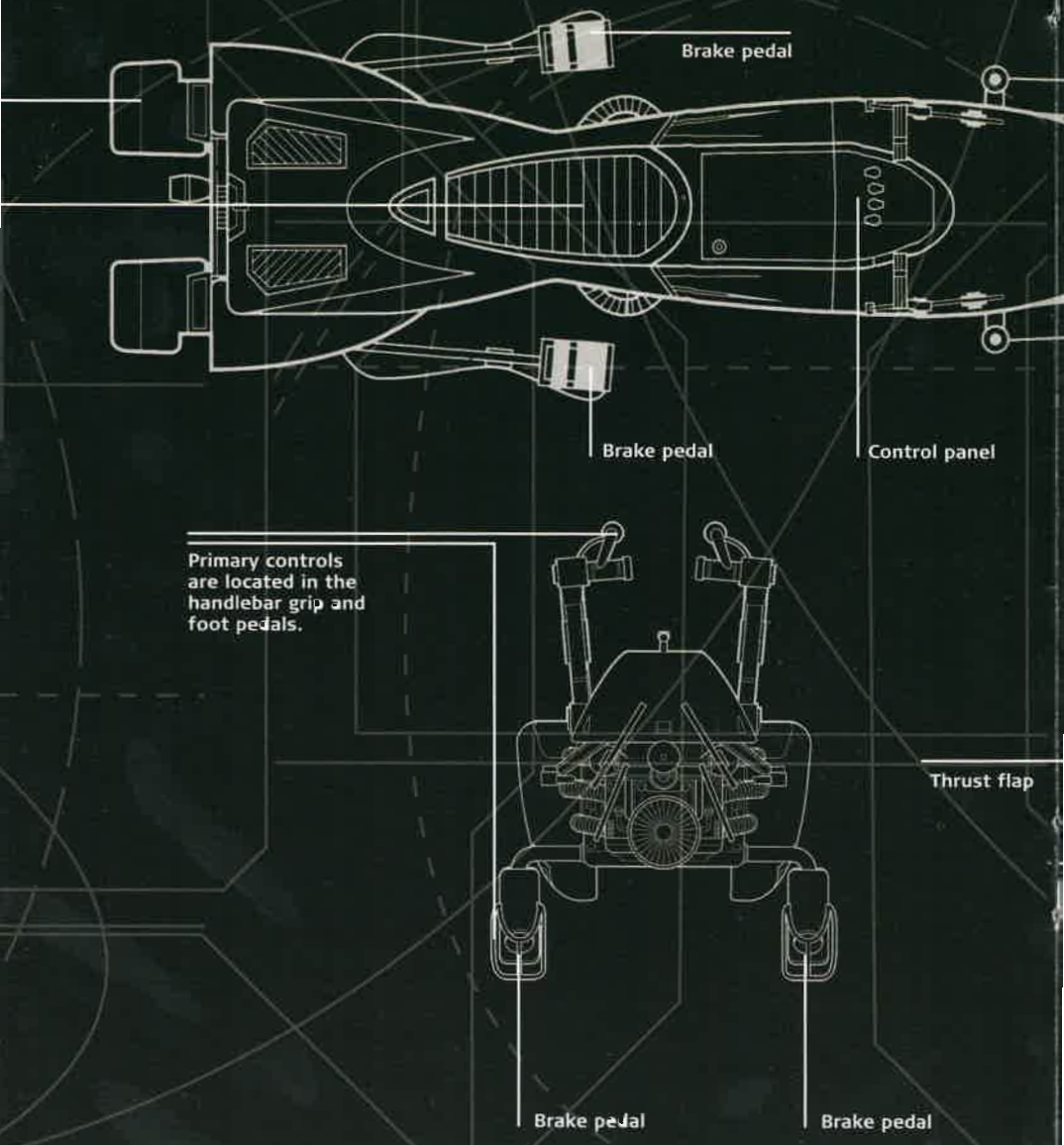
Affiliation
Empire

Thrust flap

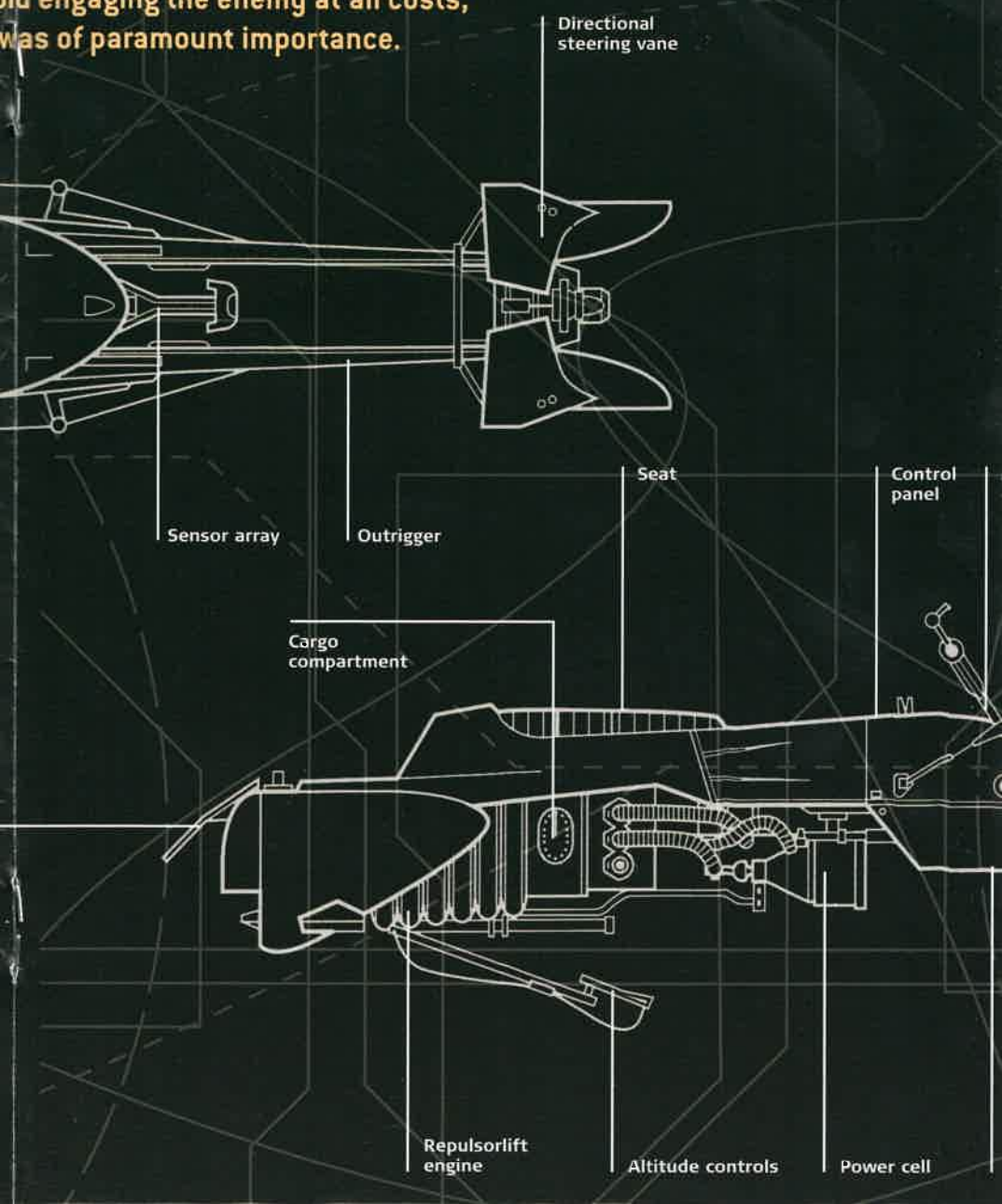
Driver and passenger, equipped with safety harnesses, sit just forward of the rear-mounted engine.

STAR WARS

The mission of scout troopers was to patrol the forest of Endor
30 minutes. They were minimally armed and instructed to avoi
even if a partner had to be abandoned. Their reconnaissance w



r and report findings every
oid engaging the enemy at all costs,
was of paramount importance.



The highly manoeuvrable speeder bikes were equipped with sensor and communications devices located between the handlebars, and included a comlink-jamming device. Speeder bikes were armed with a forward-rotating blaster cannon for combat. They were also equipped with a very powerful boost that could propel them over vast distances in a short amount of time.

Manoeuvre controls

Manoeuvring control unit

Blaster cannon

Directional steering vane

PAPLOO

THE COURAGEOUS EWOK

From starting out by being a boisterous, reckless and fun-loving Ewok scout, Paploo, lifelong friend to Wicket, Teebo and Princess Kneesaa, became the responsible, respected village shaman of Bright Tree Village.

Paploo was one of the hunting party, led by Teebo, that captured the Rebel strike team on Endor. While Teebo reacted aggressively to the strangers, Paploo was far more curious. Much as Wicket had with Princess Leia, he perhaps sensed the inherent good in the towering humans and their golden god, C3-PO. Whatever the case, this was the beginning of Paploo's eagerness to work with the Rebels.

Ewok Biker Scout?!

When his uncle, Chief Chirpa, made Han Solo's team honorary members of the tribe, Paploo was delighted to join the scouts that led the commandos to the rear entrance of the bunker. Realising a diversion was necessary, Paploo immediately took the kind of action that earned him his reputation for rashness. He had long observed the biker scouts, carefully watching how they used their metal mounts, and this allowed him to steal a speeder bike, drawing away the guards. Quickly realising he was out of his depth, again, Paploo swung away to safety.

A Future Leader

As he grew older, Paploo grew more responsible. His latent Force sensitivity, which had seen him tinker with shamanistic magic, was recognised when Chief Chirpa appointed him as village shaman. Paploo had benefited from the ousting of Logray, who had tragically fallen to the temptations of dark magic. Teebo, who had been Logray's star pupil, was passed over because of his connections to Logray. Still, he and Paploo remained friends, and Teebo was of great help to the new shaman.

Kenny Baker was to play Wicket, until his illness caused the casting of Warwick Davis in that role.

Behind the scenes

Paploo was played by Kenny Baker in *Return of the Jedi*, while Baker's old friend Jack Purvis played Teebo.

PROFILE

Paploo

Homeworld
Moon of Endor

Species
Ewok

Height
0.96 metres

Vehicle
Stolen speeder bike!

Weapon
Spear

Affiliation
Ewok

ENDOR

REBEL ARRIVAL

Dismissed by the Imperials as irrelevant, the Ewoks of Bright Tree Village had been forced to watch as the Empire violated their sacred forests. The arrival of the Rebel strike team gave the valiant and inventive Ewoks a chance to fight back, led by the ageing warrior Chief Chirpa.

The Ewoks of Bright Tree had had little contact with the galaxy at large, although the tribe had encountered the two Imperial scouting parties sent to the moon of Endor to conduct studies into the feasibility of using it as a site for the shield generator protecting the construction site of the second Death Star. Both groups of Imperials had declared the Ewoks harmless primitives, dismissing them out of hand.

Harmless, Mostly...

When the Imperial forces arrived in strength, Chirpa led from the front to calm his nervous people. He took his small group of warriors to watch the flames coming from the transport craft as they blasted ancient trees out of the way to create their landing area. This display of sheer, mindless destruction led Chief Chirpa to declare, wisely, that Bright Tree would not fight the new arrivals.

An Ewok in the Right Place

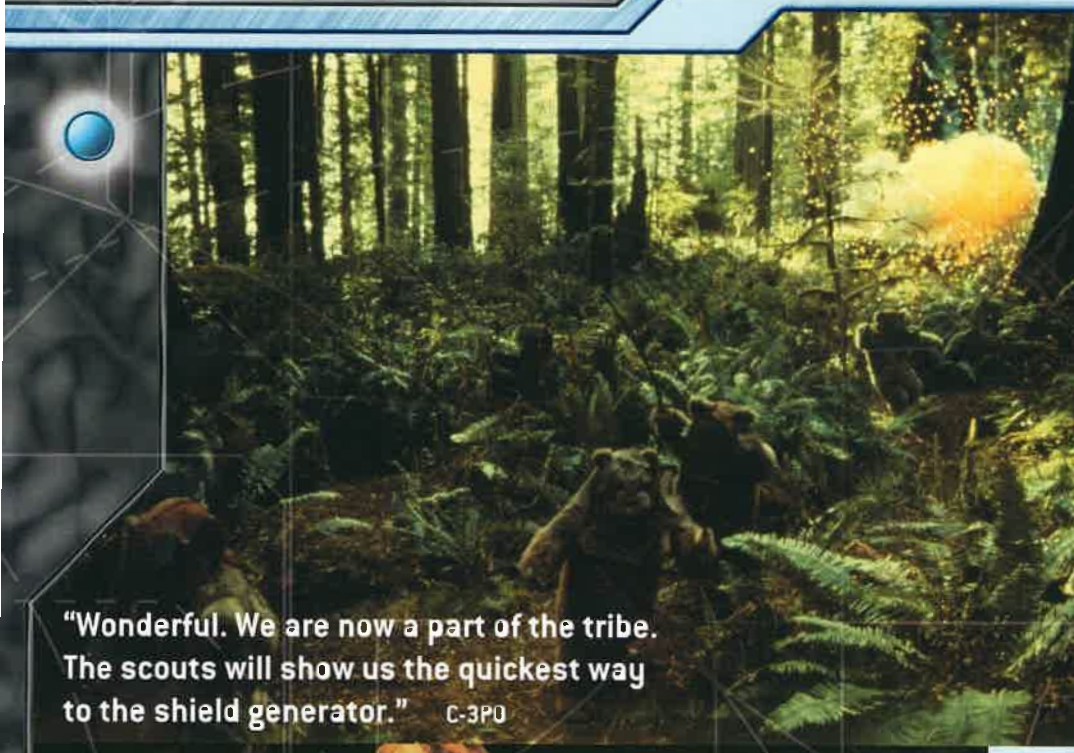
Once the Imperials were well established, Chirpa and his people did what they could to stay out of their way. One day, Ewok scout Wicket W. Warwick saw an AT-ST stumble on loose rocks. Falling badly, its munitions exploded, cracking the cockpit apart. When an excited Wicket brought the tale back to the village, the ageing Chirpa reluctantly agreed to the construction of weapons and hidden traps in anticipation of a future opportunity to strike back at the invaders.

"I do believe they think I am some sort of god."

C-3PO

"Why don't you use your divine influence and get us out of this?"

Han Solo



"Wonderful. We are now a part of the tribe. The scouts will show us the quickest way to the shield generator." C-3PO

Behind the scenes

Exteriors for the Endor forest scenes were shot near Crescent City in California, USA, but the interior of the shield generator bunker was a set at Elstree Studios near London, England.

Arrival of the Golden One

Chirpa's woes did not just come from outside the village. The village shaman, Logray, had been Chirpa's friend and advisor for many years. However, even as Chirpa himself battled the early signs of senility, Logray was rumoured to be practising the very dark magic he was supposed to protect the people from. When a proud hunting party brought human captives and some kind of tall, cylindrical device, they also brought a powerful deity – a shining gold god that the Ewoks flocked to.

Wicket had recently brought another human warrior to the village, something that had irked Logray. The arrival of yet more humans spurred the shaman into uncharacteristic cruelty – he demanded they be sacrificed to the 'golden god'. Fortunately, this was not to the god's liking. The Golden One's ire demonstrated, Chirpa was quick to order the captives freed.

Into Battle

Chirpa and the others listened as the Golden One told of the human warriors' struggle against the invaders. Chirpa was delighted to have such powerful allies and, with Logray's reluctant compliance, he pledged the tribe to help. Chirpa also insisted the humans be made honorary tribesfolk, knowing Logray would not be able to move against them easily. So it was that the Ewoks joined the Rebel Alliance, fighting alongside them at the Battle of Endor. It was the finest hour for Bright Tree, and for Chief Chirpa.

IAN McDIARMID
SHADOW OF THE EMPEROR

From Sir Alec Guinness as Obi-Wan Kenobi to Denis Lawson as Wedge Antilles, from Peter Cushing as Tarkin to Hugh Quarshie as Panaka – the *Star Wars* films have always included great British stage and screen talent. In Ian McDiarmid, the *Star Wars* saga found for the role of the Emperor one of the finest stage actor/directors of his generation.

The Emperor had first appeared as a giant hologram in *The Empire Strikes Back*. The face had been created by dubbing a chimp's eyes over the face of an old woman, the voice being provided by Clive Revill. This was the first revelation of the real evil in the galaxy. It was vital that whoever played the Emperor could create a subtle, yet supremely evil villain that would both dominate Darth Vader and also allow Vader convincingly to become a hero through his destruction of the Emperor.

Ian McDiarmid was already a celebrated stage actor when, aged 37, he played the part of Harry Hackamore in the play *Seduced*, by Sam Shepard. The role required him to wear extensive prosthetic make-up and play a far older character. His performance convinced George Lucas and Richard Marquand that McDiarmid was the man to play the Emperor in *The Return of the Jedi*.

From Emperor to Senator and Back Again

McDiarmid himself pointed out that by the time filming began on the first of the prequel movies, *The Phantom Menace*, he had reached the correct age to play Palpatine when the character was some 36 years younger than he was in *Return of the Jedi*. Now, however, the challenge was doubled, as McDiarmid had to play both sides of the scheming Palpatine – the seemingly benevolent Senator Palpatine and the phantom menace that was Sith Lord Darth Sidious.

In an interview with the *Star Wars* Insider during the filming of Episode II, McDiarmid summed up Palpatine's duality:

Ian McDiarmid defines Palpatine

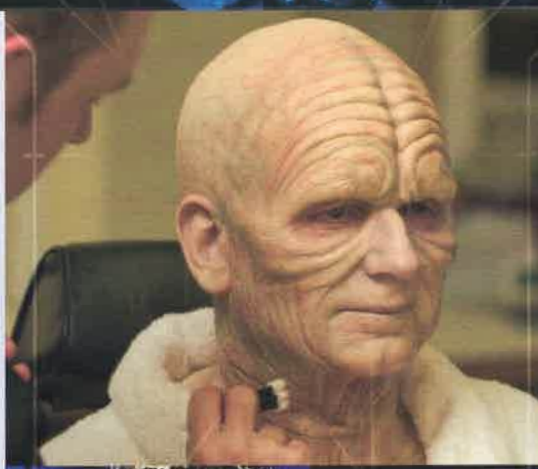
"... he is a man of mystery. That is how he exercises, maintains, and increases his power – by choosing what he's public about. He's the great political manipulator of all time."

"Palpatine appears to be a hard-working politician – and when you say the word politician, immediately you think about equivocation, which is the nature of the job. But at the same time, I know that underneath all that is an evil soul. The undercurrents are always there in his mind and in his gut."

"Everything he does is an act of pure hypocrisy, and that's interesting to play. I suppose it's rather like playing Iago. All the characters in the play – including Othello until the end – think that 'Honest Iago' is a decent guy doing his job, and he's quite liked. But at the same time there's a tremendous evil subconscious in operation."

Full Circle

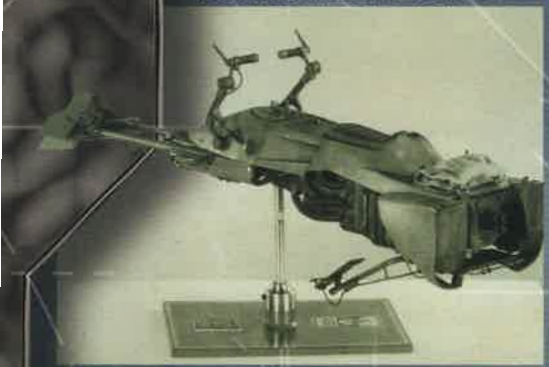
Now, with the completion of the *Star Wars* saga and the addition of Ian McDiarmid as the Emperor in the DVD release of *The Empire Strikes Back*, McDiarmid is one of the very few actors to play the same character through the prequels and the original trilogy.



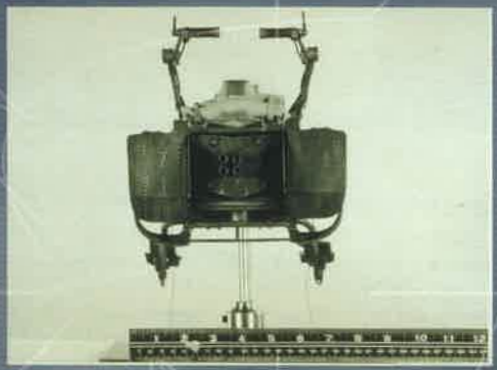
THE SPEEDER BIKE

AN ILLUSION OF SPEED

FILMING THE SPEEDER BIKE



1 The speeder bike chase was a combination of miniatures such as this one and actors on prop bikes, all filmed against a bluescreen background.



2 A rear view revealing the scale of one of the miniatures. The full-sized props, of which around a dozen were made, were over four metres long.

5 Production miniatures had to be made for each of the characters, although the scout troopers' helmets removed the need to model their faces.

6 Stop-motion animation was used for action sequences, such as the scene when Paploo stole one of the scouts' bikes.

George Lucas's request for a 'rocket-powered scooter' resulted in a slew of artwork from the *Return of the Jedi* concept team. Nilo Rodis-Jamero's sketches envisioned speeder bikes as long and blocky, with a large engine in the rear and controls in the foot pedals.

3 The speeder bike riders were also constructed in miniature as fully articulated, incredibly detailed puppets that could sit astride the bikes.

4 The miniatures were many times smaller than life size but had to be fully detailed as they were filmed from a wide range of angles.

7 The forest was shot using a Steadycam rig at one frame a second. Played at normal speed, it seemed as if the camera was hurtling through the trees.

8 To give the illusion of travelling at over 150 km/h, the bikes were filmed in front of a bluescreen onto which a forest background could be dropped.

DID YOU KNOW?

1 Why didn't Darth Maul simply blast Anakin Skywalker from his speeder bike in Episode I?

2 Do speeder bikes appear in Episode II?

3 Where did they shoot the Endor sequences for Episode VI?

ANSWERS:

1 Darth Maul's Custom Razalon FC-20 speeder bike, dubbed the Bloodfin, was faster even than the 74-Z used on Endor, but was unarmed. Sith assassins have no use for blasters!

2 No. Anakin borrows Owen Lars' Mobquet Zephyr-G swoop – not technically a speeder bike. The sequence from the Battle of Geonosis featuring 74-Z speeder bikes was cut from Episode II at the animatics stage.

3 The forests of Endor were recreated in a giant redwood forest near California's Crescent City.

STAR WARS

D

Dactillion

Creature
Episode III

This huge flying reptilian was formerly a deadly predator until the Utapaun people tamed it using fresh meat. The dactillion has four legs, with clawed feet that allow it to scale the rock walls of the sinkholes in which the Utapauns build their cities.

Daluuj

Location
Expanded Universe

This Outer Rim world has a hostile, storm-wracked environment and an inhospitable surface of churning oceans and muddy continents. Admiral Ackbar crashed there on his way to Yavin IV some time before the evacuation of the Rebel base there. He was rescued by the *Millennium Falcon*.

Dark Troopers

Droid
Expanded Universe

The Dark Trooper project was developed by Imperial General Rom Mohc not long after the Battle of Yavin. Dark Troopers were an advanced form of battle droid. The project was eventually destroyed by Kyle Katarn.

Death Star Droid

Droid
Clone Wars, Episode IV

This was the nickname for the RA-7 protocol droid series, a huge number of which were posted to the first Death Star station by the Imperial Security Bureau to act as spies.

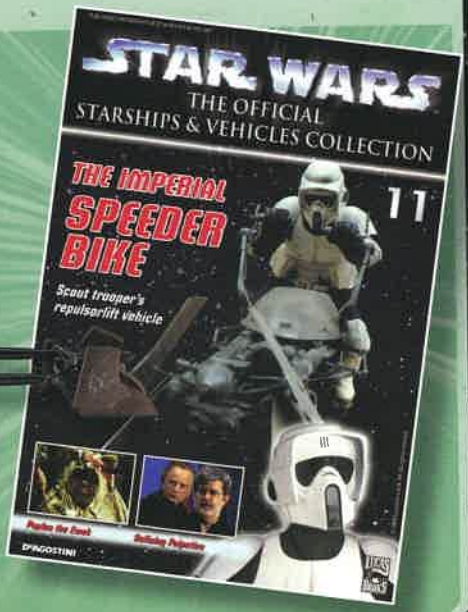
Deget, Opula

Character
Episode III

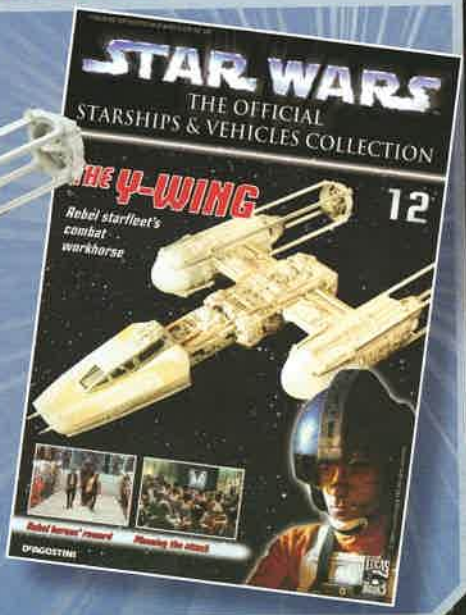
Opula was a human opera singer on Coruscant. She delighted in ruining her rivals careers by spreading scandalous stories about them to the press.

IN THIS ISSUE

WITH ISSUE 11: THE IMPERIAL SPEEDER BIKE



IN YOUR NEXT ISSUE



WITH ISSUE 12: REBEL FLEET'S Y-WING STARFIGHTER

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